

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ALGIER 01228 051256Z

70

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 AF-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 NIC-01 OMB-01 COME-00 DRC-01

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R 051218Z JUN 74

FM USINT ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0615

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 1228

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AG

SUBJ: WILAYA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

1. ELECTIONS TO THE FIFTEEN WILAYA POPULAR ASSEMBLIES
TOOK PLACE JUNE 2 AFTER INTENSE THREE-WEEK CAMPAIGN
IN WHICH ALL MEMBERS OF ALGERIAN LEADERSHIP PARTICIPATED.

MININTERIOR MEDEGHRI STATED AFTERWARD THAT
78 PERCENT OF OVER SIX MILLION ELIGIBLE VOTERS CAST
BALLOTS BUT FROM OBSERVATIONS OF EMBOFFS IN ALGIERS
AND OTHER AREAS WE JUDGE TURNOUT TO HAVE BEEN MUCH
LOWER, PROBABLY BETWEEN 30 AND 50 PERCENT.

2. WILAYA ASSEMBLIES, ELECTED FOR FIVER-YEAR TERM,
ENJOY IN THEORY CERTAIN LIMITED POWERS OF LOCAL
INITIATIVE. IN PRACTICE, UNDER BOUMEDIENE REGIME, THEIR
PRINCIPAL FUNCTION HAS BEEN TO CARRY OUT PROGRAMS
AND POLICIES ESTABLISHED BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT,
PARTICULARLY THE AGRARIAN REFORM. FLOW IS ONE WAY --
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PAGE 02 ALGIER 01228 051256Z

FROM THE TOP DOWN. FLN PARTY IN COORDINATION WITH

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR PRESENTED TWO CANDIDATES FOR EACH SEAT, GIVING SEMBLANCE OF DEMOCRACY TO CAREFULLY CONTROLLED PROCESS. FOREGOING HELPS EXPLAIN HIGH DEGREE OF PUBLIC APATHY TOWARD ELECTIONS, IN SPITE OF HEAVY PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AND GOVERNMENT HOPES FOR HIGHER PARTICIPATION.

3. DESPITE ITS STATED INTENTIONS TO DECENTRALIZE ADMINISTRATION AND TO ESTABLISH MORE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, ALGERIAN

LEADERSHIP IS NOT CONFIDENT THAT MORE REPRESENTATIVE REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES WOULD WORK TO ITS FAVOR. IT IS AWARE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT MUCH RURAL OPPOSITION TO AGRARIAN REFORM STILL EXISTS AND THAT CRITICISM OF FOOD AND HOUSING SHORTAGES, RISING PRICES AND HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT IS WIDESPREAD. IT FEARS THAT REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES, IF NOT TIGHTLY CONTROLLED, WOULD BECOME EMBARRASSING OUTLETS FOR THESE FRUSTRATIONS.

4. IT IS ALSO INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT ELECTORAL PREPARATIONS DID NOT INTERRUPT GOVERNMENT'S PREOCCUPATION WITH INTERNATIONAL MATTERS. IN IMMEDIATE JUNE 1-3 ELECTORAL PERIOD, FOR EXAMPLE, PLO CHAIRMAN YASSER ARAFAT, UN SPECIAL ENVOY RAOUL PREBISCH, NORTH KOREAN VICE PREMIER HEN DAM AND DELEGATIONS FROM NORTH VIETNAM, PAIGC, MAURITANIA, YUGOSLAVIA AND USSR WERE IN ALGIERS. IN ADDITION, FOUR ALGERIAN MINISTERS WERE AWAY ATTENDING INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES.EAGLETON

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